

## **Flesh vs. Spirit**

Romans 7:14-25 This section deals with the inability of the Law to change man's problem. Most of us, however, think of this information as a description of our daily struggle. The Law cannot transform the old nature but does expose the sinfulness of the human condition. The believer who tries to live under Law will only activate the old nature; he will not eradicate it.

With Adam and Eve, we see the first and foremost characteristic of the flesh or old nature. They tried to control their own lives without God rather than surrendering to His will. Ever since this, man has tried to control his own feelings, thoughts, activities, future, etc. and those of his fellow man. Eve's first act after eating the fruit was to convince Adam to join.

A primary purpose of the Mosaic Law was to teach Israel their need for the help of God in order to attain salvation. The sacrifices should have served as a constant reminder that they needed propitiation outside of self. However, Israel twisted the Law to become a "toolbox" of self-help techniques. "I can be righteous if I am circumcised and keep all the commandments and regulations in the Law." Therefore, that which was intended for good, the Law, they used for evil to satisfy their flesh (to be in control of self).

<p><b>The old nature knows no law</b></p> <p><b>The new nature needs no law</b></p>
---

The section is not teaching that we have a split personality. Rather, the communication is that our mind, will, and body are governed by either the old nature or the new nature, by the flesh or the spirit.

Romans 7:21-25 Wiersbe in his book The Bible Exposition Commentary states the following:

The believer has an old nature that wants to keep him in bondage: "I will get free from these old sins!" The Christian says to himself, "I determine here and now that I will not do this any longer." What happens? He exerts all his willpower and energy, and for a time succeeds; but then when he least expects it, he falls again. Why? Because he tried to overcome his old nature with Law, and the Law cannot deliver us from the old nature. When you move under the Law, you are only making the old nature stronger; because "the strength of sin is the Law (1Corinthians 15:56). Instead of being a dynamo that gives us power to overcome, the Law is a magnet that draws out of us all kinds of sin and corruption. The inward man may delight in the Law of God (Ps.

119:35), but the old nature delights in breaking the Law of God. No wonder the believer under Law becomes tired and discouraged, and eventually gives up! He is a captive, and his condition is “wretched.” (The Greek word indicates a person who is exhausted after a battle.) What could be more wretched than exerting all your energy to try to live a good life, only to discover that the best you do is still not good enough!

Is there any deliverance? Of course! “I thank God that there is someone who shall deliver me – Jesus Christ our Lord!” Because the believer is united to Christ, he is dead to the Law and no longer under its authority. But he is alive to God and able to draw on the power of the holy spirit. The explanation of this victory is given in Romans 8.

**SURRENDER IS THE  
ONLY WAY  
TO TAKE CONTROL**

Romans 8:1 Everyone is subject to the law of sin and death. The LAW is absolute, immutable, without prejudice to all because we are descendants of Adam. You may not know the law or refuse to believe it and ignore it, but in the end, everyone is subject to the law. The only way out from under it is by a greater law, an overriding law – the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:3 The Mosaic Law could not make ineffective the law of sin and death. The Mosaic Law had admirable purposes for man’s benefit but was limited because the problem of sin could not be eliminated. The only way to override the law of sin and death was to enforce a greater law that superseded it, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Two dominant desires of the flesh are - 1) the desire to be in control and 2) rebellion. The Law was twisted into a means to change and/or govern oneself and others. The Law also provided a launching pad for rebellion. Like we see in Adam, Eve, and Cain, the human inclination is to rebel and disobey just because we are told to do something. “Don’t you touch that” is the recurring cry of the concerned parent right before the child acts wrongly.

**Two pronged evil of the old nature:  
1) Desire to control  
2) Rebellion**

Romans 8:5 Set before us are two contrasting choices, the flesh and the spirit. The spirit represents Christ's accomplishments and his lordship within you via the spirit. Christ always did the will of God because he always asked for His help and did what he was told. We now have him living in us enabling us to be like him. We have a new self that is Christ-like.

The key word in this section is "mind." The mind contains our thoughts, purposes, free will, our ability to chose. We decide if we are going to follow our flesh or surrender and ask God for help to live by the spirit. When we accept Christ, we are given the opportunity to choose. Before Christ, we have only the flesh to obey.

Romans 8:6-8 All the good works of man do not please God. Great acts of philanthropy and humanitarianism that are not under the direction of the spirit are equal to any other act of the flesh like drunkenness or immorality. Two, and only two ways, exist with no shades of gray – the flesh and the spirit. The flesh, no matter how society views it, is still hostile toward God and does not please God.

Romans 8:14 Those led by the spirit live by the new nature and are the sons of God.

\*\*\*\*\*

- 1) The first and foremost characteristic of the flesh or old nature is to control our own lives without God. What aspects of your life give evidence to this tendency?

---



---

- 2) How does this tendency ill-effect your life, and what can you do to offset its effects?

---



---

- 3) Why is the Law not effective in dealing with human nature?

---



---

- 4) A primary purpose of the Mosaic Law was to teach Israel their need for the help of God in order to attain salvation. Do you see the need for complete surrender, and if so, how can you?

---



---

5) Surrender is the only way to take control of your life. What does surrender mean to you, and how can you surrender? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6) What are the two pronged evil tendencies of the flesh? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7) The mind contains our thoughts, purposes, free will, our ability to choose. We decide if we are going to follow our flesh or surrender and ask God for help to live by the spirit. What hinders you from surrendering? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Word Doers #3

James 1:22 Prove yourselves doers of the word...

---

## Meditation

- Meditation is biblical discipline that you are able to do. Unlike Eastern meditation where the focus is to empty the mind, Christian meditation is an attempt to fill the mind. The former is about detachment, and the latter about attachment. You can do this! Psalm 1:1-3; 119:15, 97-99; Joshua 1:6-9
- Meditation can be practiced at any time and under almost every circumstance. However, to develop the habit, we should designate quiet time alone each day. Select the best time for you each day.
- We must be resolved to take the time and guard the time, or we will be overwhelmed with the frantic activity that has become normal to us.
- Find a place that is quiet and free from interruption. Leave your cell phone elsewhere.
- Sit in a straight chair with your back correctly positioned in the chair and both feet on the floor. To slouch indicates inattention, and to cross the legs restricts the circulation. Place the hands on the knees palms up in a gesture of receptivity.
- Select a verse of Scripture or a section of Scripture to focus on. Think deeply about the verse, and ask God to help you understand the truth He wants you to gain. Stay focused on this one thing only. Do not let other things interfere. You can think about the other things at another time. Right now, stay focused on the truth that is contained within the verse or section. Try Romans 8:35-39.
- Select a situation in the Scriptures such as when Jesus was sleeping in the boat and the disciples became fearful. See yourself there with them in the boat. Ask God to help you understand what He wants you to understand. Stay in it until you have a peace about knowing.
- Focus on one aspect about Yahweh or one verse that speaks of His nature. Try to focus on "God is love." Muse Romans 11:33-36 or Exodus 3:14 and 15 or Exodus 34:6 and 7 or Revelation 4:8.
- Meditate on any aspect of God's creation, and ask Him to let you see Him in it. Psalm 19:1 -The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
- Do not allow yourself to become discouraged. Disciplines take time to develop but are worth the effort. In order to surrender and take control, we must develop the habit of focusing on God's will and not on our own.

## Freedom of Slavery

Galatians 5:1 The problem with humanity is our very nature. We are born dead in sins and are slaves to our own depraved nature. The Law was not intended to resolve the problem rather to hold us in until God's solution came with Jesus Christ. The Jews endeavored to practice the Law unwittingly thinking it would bring righteousness and salvation. Their futile attempts were nothing more than the manifestation of the sinful nature, a desire to control self. They turned the glorious, holy Law into an instrument of works for self-improvement and in so doing missed the whole point of the Law. The Law pointed out the wantonness in the plight of humanity with a detailed description of sin, the utter helplessness of man to resolve sin or sinning, and that the sacrifice of an innocent one was needed to reconcile matters.

Christ set us free from the slavery of the flesh and the Law. Important to remember while studying this chapter is:

**Two pronged evil of the old nature:**  
**1) Desire to control**  
**2) Rebellion**

The desire to control one's own life and the lives of others makes the Law very attractive. This mindset is often referred to as legalism. Rebellion, on the other hand, is also an expression of the flesh called antinomianism. An antinomian holds that under the dispensation of grace, the moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is considered necessary to salvation. Those given to this thinking are vulnerable to lust sins. This mindset may also be referred to as the liberty or license to sin. Legalism and license in the religious arena are the inadvertent reaction to and the incorrect understanding of the freedom one receives in Christ.

**Two false doctrines:**  
**1) Legalism**  
**2) Antinomianism**

Because of our sinful nature and wrong doctrine, sincere Christians are victimized by two major misconceptions. The propensity to control leads to legalism, while the propensity to rebel leads to antinomianism. Both cause bondage and slavery.

Galatians 5:1 The yoke of slavery is the flesh lived out by legalism or liberalism.

Galatians 5:2 If you think circumcision or any work of man can accomplish righteousness, Christ is of no benefit to you.

Galatians 5:5 When we endeavor to control our lives by the Law or any self-centered means, the accomplishments of Christ are void or dead to us.

Galatians 5:6 Faith in any aspect of the flesh does not work.

Galatians 5:13 The word “opportunity” means a place from which a movement or attack is made, a base of operations. The freedom we have is from the cruel bondage of the flesh. We are now to stop living for self and live lovingly with others. The freedom is not so we return to the slavery of the flesh, the old man.

Galatians 5:14 New man living, love, and walking by the spirit are all connected. Conversely, old man living, self-centeredness, and walking by the flesh are linked.

Galatians 5:15 The inevitable consequence of living by the flesh (particularly in religious settings) is to bite and devour one another. Most churches destroy themselves within one generation because followers walk by the flesh and not the spirit.

Galatians 5:16 The great key to living this new life in Christ is to focus on walking by the spirit and living lovingly rather than to focus on putting off the old. If your attention is centered on the new and on striving to live lovingly, you will walk by the spirit and produce the fruit thereof. If you focus on the old, you will be quickly seduced into the religious works of the flesh like the Law.

Ephesians 4:22-32 When the new man is on the throne of your mind, the old man is not. When your new man gets off the throne, the old immediately and automatically returns to the throne.

Galatians 5:16-18 The great struggle of Christianity briefly stated

Galatians 5:19-21 If these works are the practice of your life, your normal mode of operation, then you are walking by the flesh and are in big trouble. Occasional acts of indiscretion are not the same as a lifestyle of sinful behavior.

**Works of the Flesh:** The description in Romans 1 relates to those who reject God and do not have Christ in their lives. This grouping (in Galatians) is especially to the church and relates to the behavior of Christians who walk by the flesh. Some similarities can be found between the two, but more differences are seen.

Immorality – Illicit or wrongful sexual activity outlined in the Old Testament such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals, etc.

Impurity – Romans 1:24 – Uncleanliness in a moral sense; the impurity of lustful, licentious behavior that is lacking moral restraints, especially disregarding sexual restraints

Sensuality – Unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence

Idolatry – Colossians 3:5 – The attractiveness of idolatry is controllable gods that cater to your lust.

Sorcery – Greek word *pharmakeia*, the use or the administering of drugs and/or sorcery, magical arts, often found in connection with idolatry and fostered by it

Enmities – The King James translates this word as hatred, active and typically mutual hatred or ill will.

Strife – Romans 1:29 – Bitter (sometimes violent) conflict or dissension or contention, wrangling

Jealousy – An envious and contentious rivalry

Outbursts of anger – Controlled mental anger contrasted to an outburst is not necessarily considered a work of the flesh, while an outburst is deemed to be so.

Disputes – Electioneering for office; apparently, in the NT a courting distinction, a desire to put oneself forward, a partisan and fractious spirit, partisanship, fractiousness. This word is found before NT times only in Aristotle where it denotes a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means.

Dissensions – Disagreement that leads to discord, division

Factions – Sect, heretical act of taking capture: e.g. storming a city; a body of men following their own tenets or that of their sect or party

Envy – Romans 1:29 – Painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage

Drunkenness

Carousing – Romans 13:13 – Revel, carousal      The word’s literal meaning is a nocturnal and riotous procession of half drunken and playful men who after supper parade through the streets with torches and music in honor of Bacchus or some other deity. They would sing and play before houses of male and female friends; hence, it is used generally of feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in partying.

Galatians 5:21    What is stated here is very serious business, so do not deceive yourself or allow anyone else to deceive you. The list contains the behavior of those who walk by the flesh. For those who do not live by their own abilities but surrender to the lordship of Christ, they produce fruit. Their focus is not on producing the fruit, rather on obedience to the lordship (which simply stated is walking in love).

Galatians 5:24-26    A great summary to the section

\*\*\*\*\*

1. The problem with humanity is our very nature. Do you understand this concept and how it has hindered you personally and in dealing with other people?

---



---

2. What are the two predominant aspects of human nature that influence our behavior?

---

3. Legalism and license in the religious arena are the inadvertent reactions to the incorrect understanding of the freedom one receives in Christ. In what dominant wrong way have you responded, and how has it ill-effected you?

---



---

4. The inevitable consequence of living by the flesh particularly in religious settings is to bite and devour one another. Have you been guilty of this, and what can you do to rectify the situation? \_\_\_\_\_

---

5. The whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." Do you understand why loving your neighbor is walking by the new you and how you can love the people in your life more?

---

---

6. What is the difference between the list of sins in Romans 1 and Galatians 5?

---

7. In which works of the flesh are you most vulnerable? \_\_\_\_\_

## Word Doers #4 James 1:22 Prove yourselves doers of the word...

---

### Get Busy Living

Romans 13:11-14 Spiritual vigilance is mandatory to right living. Apathy, sluggishness are the weapons of the adversary.

Ephesians 5:15-21 We are to make the most of our time because the days are evil. The warfare that rages demands disciplined aggressive activity, not laziness.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-11 Get busy living, or get busy dying! Inactivity causes atrophy, a wasting away or progressive decline of both mind and body.

Genesis 2:15 God's design for man included work. The first man was told to work.

Ecclesiastes 3:13

And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.

Having the ability to work is a privilege from God. Some people have limited ability to work because of physical or mental handicaps. However, most everybody can be active in some way so as not to become languid or sluggish in life and in our walk with God. Retirement should not be about laziness but rather a reprogramming of activities. Keep busy, or lose your abilities quicker.

Ephesians 4:28; 2Thessalonians 3:10-13 Our society teaches that being lazy, playing with electronic games, watching TV are more desirable, more fun, than working. When we consider all the resources devoted to educating children, it is foolish that this important aspect of life is neglected.

Not working, when one is able, violates the Word of God and the very way that we were made. The mind is not satisfied when the hands are idle. Not working in Thessalonica gave way for the people to become busybodies.

Proverbs 13:4 To desire and not to have is very frustrating. To be lazy is a very dangerous vice which can bring about the fatal destruction of one's character. To be lazy opens oneself up to sins and problems.

Proverbs 15:19; 18:9; 21:25 The desire of the slothful kills him. The slothful think they are so smart in scheming and figuring out how not to work or how not to work very hard.

Proverbs 21:26 The slothful are very selfish, not thinking about others, but thinking mostly about themselves.

Proverbs 24:30-34 If you give a man a fish, he will have food for the day; if you teach him how to fish, he will know how to feed himself for a lifetime. This concept is good, but it does not work for the lazy person. He can be taught how to fish but still will not fish. Poverty and laziness are frequent companions. Not every poor person is lazy, but poverty and laziness many times accompany each other.

Proverbs 26:13-15 The slothful are frequently the weariest, most miserable and defeated people.

Ephesians 6:5-8 The right attitude is important when we work.

Colossians 3:16-24 Whatsoever we do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, heartily as to the Lord, not unto men.